

**THE INFLUENCE OF SHAMANIC PRACTICE ON THE  
DEPOSITION OF PREHISTORIC HUMAN REMAINS IN  
BOGS.**

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## **ABSTRACT**

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The combination of cold, anaerobic, anti bacterial and acidic conditions in the peat bogs of North West Europe has produced a peculiar assortment of perfectly preserved human remains collectively known as the bog bodies. Human beings have been deposited in these wetland areas since the Mesolithic up until the post medieval period and there are multifarious theories regarding the possible reasons for their deposition. This study gives an overview of six theories one of which conjectures that the bog people were shamans. This final theory is tested, examined and evaluated in more detail in order to identify the possible influence of shamanic practice in bog body deposition.

"For in that sleep of death what dreams may come, when we have shuffled off this mortal coil ?"

(William Shakespeare)

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## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

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This thesis was designed primarily to test the theory that aspects of shamanic practice may have influenced the deposition of bog bodies in prehistory. It explored the potential connection between the activities of druids/shamans and the fate of those people across Northern Europe, Britain and Ireland who have come to be known collectively as the bog bodies. It did this as objectively as possible, endeavouring to, examine, evaluate and interpret the evidence in a clear, logical, succinct manner and without prejudice.

The literature review provides a definition of what shamanism is and how it has been practiced historically and ethnographically. It discusses shamanic practices in the Americas and Eurasia but focuses primarily on those of Eurasian origin. This is because certain religious beliefs and ritual practices including elements of shamanism have been shared across Eurasia throughout prehistory (Taylor 2003, 148). It discusses trance, an integral part of the shamanic experience and the different methods used to induce this altered state of consciousness. It goes on to look at the archaeological evidence for shamanic activity throughout prehistory, in addition druidism, is defined and compared to shamanism.

Many theories have been proposed regarding why people were placed in bogs. Archaeological evidence, historical accounts, and forensic examination of the bodies have all been used to support these numerous interpretations. In order to argue shamanistic involvement chapter three discusses six theories in some detail including, death due to natural causes, accident or murder, summary executions, sacrifices to the gods, kingship rites and shamans involved in macabre theatrical rituals. Were the people consigned to the bogs themselves shaman/ druids or substitute performers who physically acted out the metaphysical journey of their shamanic masters for the prize of immortality? This final theory may not necessarily contradict the others but instead run parallel with them. In order to explore the theory more deeply, chapter four outlines and defines nine characteristics that may be interpreted as shamanic. It goes on to introduce ten bog bodies in the form of case studies and

highlights the particular shamanic characteristics each body exhibits. Chapter five includes the main discussion which involves an analysis of the previous chapters in order to ascertain if and how shamanistic practices may have played a part in the lives and eventual deaths of those consigned to the bogs. Chapter six outlines the conclusions reached having examined and discussed the evidence.

## METHODOLOGY

This was a desk based study which used peer reviewed academic papers, journals and books related to the theoretical study of shamanism, druidism and bog bodies. Equipped with an understanding of what defines shamanism or druidism it was then possible to extract various aspects of shamanic/druidic practice which could then be compared with the treatment and deposition of bog bodies.

Case studies of ten prehistoric bog bodies whose modes of dispatch and ante/post-mortem treatment conform to a specific set of characteristics, that may indicate shamanic involvement, were tested and evaluated. Bodies from Ireland, England, Denmark, The Netherlands and Germany dating from the Neolithic to the Iron Age were chosen. These individuals were selected in order to show continuity of practice geographically and chronologically. All ten bodies had been radiocarbon dated and so could be placed correctly in time. In every instance, at least two or more of the following characteristics were required to be present:

1. Excessive violence including dismemberment/decapitation/stabbing.
2. Asphyxiation manifested by the presence of ropes or garrottes.
3. The ingestion of hallucinogens.
4. Physical deformities or other unusual physical traits.
5. Un-calloused hands and manicured fingernails.
6. Nakedness or semi nakedness.
7. Presence of capes, belts, hats and armlets made of leather, wool or fur on or near the body while otherwise naked.

8. Focus on the head and/or hair.
9. Restraints such as wooden stakes, withies, hurdles, bindings.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

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### 2.1. SHAMANS AN ETHNOGRAPHIC AND HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE.

In attempting to understand shamanism, it is perhaps useful to first of all define what the term means. The word shaman comes from saman, a Siberian Tungus word meaning "ecstatic one" (plate 1) (Aldhouse-Green, and Aldhouse-Green 2005, 10). Shamanism is a belief in spirits or supernatural beings, the existence of other worlds and other planes or states of consciousness (Price 2004, 6). The shaman can communicate, control and even allow the spirits to enter his or her body in order to speak through him or her (Walter-Namba and Newman-Friedman 2004, xxii).



**Plate 1: Tungus Shaman from Siberia with drum (after Vitebsky 1995, 57)**

The shaman is an individual who acts as a go-between or intermediary between this world and the world of the supernatural (Price 2004, 6). There are a variety of ways a shaman can enter the other worlds, these include inducing a trance state using ecstatic dancing, drumming, singing, meditation, starvation, isolation, sleep deprivation, hypoxia or by inhaling/ingesting substances with hallucinogenic properties (Williams 2003, 101). In the world of spirit, shamans may commune with the gods or ancestors in order to intercede on behalf of their community (*ibid.*). Upon their return to the mortal world they are then able to share their experiences and the knowledge they have gained while in these other worlds or states of consciousness (*ibid.*).

Shamanism is not in itself a religion but rather a link between religion and society (Williams 2003, 101). It is a way of relating and understanding the natural world alongside the world of the supernatural (*ibid.*). It is also important to note that shamanism may not necessarily be central to a society's spiritual belief system but instead coexist with other beliefs and practices (Eliade 2004, 5). In many traditions, he or she can also be a seer, magician, poet or healer. They are often set apart from

society and are specifically chosen because they suffer from serious illness or a condition such as epilepsy that indicates they have been touched by the spirits (Howard 2008, 57).

For societies that incorporate shamanism as part of their culture the cosmos is composed of at least three planes (Williams 2003, 101). These planes are identified as, the upper world of gods and spirits, the middle world of humans, animals and plants and the lower or underworld where the ancestors, together with more malevolent entities may dwell (plate 2) (Aldhouse-Green and Aldhouse-Green 2005, 11). All three worlds are connected by a central axis or axis mundi (Williams 2003, 101; Eliade 2004, 259). These cosmic regions can be traversed precisely because of the presence of the axis mundi which may take the form of a tree, a mountain, a river or a pillar (*ibid*, 259-264). The axis mundi or centre passes through an opening that can be navigated by the gods and spirits of the other worlds, as well as the soul of the shaman while he or she is in a state of ecstasy (*ibid*, 259).



**Plate 2: The Shaman's drum depicting the three tier cosmos (after Howard 2008, 58).**

The symbolism of the centre is not exclusive to shamanic belief and it can be applied to any sacred place where it is perceived a breakthrough from the supernatural to the natural world has taken place (Eliade 2004, 259). For example in the Iron Age the idea of nature spirits was shared across Eurasia including a widespread belief in what the Romans called *genii locorum* or spirits of place (Taylor 2003, 148-149). Landscapes and their particular features such as streams, rivers, bogs, mountains, caves and islands were believed to have some otherworldly connection (plate 3) (Taylor 2003, 149:

Aldhouse-Green and Aldhouse-Green 2005, 14). The liminal character of these areas made them perfect for the practice of sacrificial rites and the deposition of votive offerings (*ibid.*).



**Plate 3: Liminal places, the shore of Lough Gill, County Sligo and Errigal Mountain, County Donegal (Brennan 2013)**

The raised bog is a highly distinctive feature on the landscape, a place somewhere between land and water, an in-between world where hierophany may take place making it an ideal place to deposit the ultimate votive offering, a human being (Taylor 2003, 149). In Algonkian shamanism, these hierophanies or manifestations of the sacred took place in rock formations, cave fissures and gushing streams which, were seen as the intersections of their cosmos (Aldhouse-Green and Aldhouse-Green 2005, 14).

While in the state of trance, visual and auditory hallucinations can take place where the shaman may encounter a spiritual counsellor or guide and this entity is very often in the form of an animal although it can also be a mythical creature, an ancestor or even a living person (Williams 2010, 35). Another element of the trance state experience is transmogrification, a process that causes the individual to morph from human to animal form (Aldhouse-Green and Aldhouse Green 2005, 13). Animal hallucination or zoopsia, as it is also known, is thought to be one of the most common forms of hallucination experienced by those in a trance state (Williams 2010, 35).

One intriguing part of the shamanic experience is the spiritual dismemberment experienced by the shaman initiate (fig 1). Dyukhede, a Siberian shaman in the 1930's, gave a graphic description of his

experience in the spirit world. He describes going through an opening in a rock face where he finds a naked man fanning a fire with bellows, above a cauldron (Vitebsky 2001, 60). The naked man cuts off Dyukhade's head; slices up his body and throws his disarticulated remains into the cauldron which, then boils for three years (*ibid.*). At one point, Dyukhade's head is taken out and forged on an anvil. The bones and flesh are poured into the river, then taken back out and put back together, flesh on bone (*ibid.*). He had been reduced to a disarticulated skeleton, reassembled and reborn in order to combat the spirits that brought disease and starvation to his people (*ibid.*, 8).



**Figure 1: Depiction of shamanic dismemberment (after Vitebsky 2001, 61)**

Much of what a shaman does involves performance and he, or she, must be able to engage the audience through that performance. The tools used by a shaman to induce trance, summon up spirits and embody the psychic experience include such things as drums, gongs, bells, quartz crystals, and rattles (Aldhouse-Green and Aldhouse-Green 2005, 14). One property of quartz crystals is an optical phenomenon known as triboluminescence (Van Pool 2009, 183). When a piece of quartz is rubbed against another stone, the breaking of the chemical bonds in its crystalline matrix produces a flash of light (*ibid.*). Many shamans have used quartz in this manner in order to demonstrate their magical power (*ibid.*). Mircea Eliade refers to quartz crystals as "solid light" and claims that they are part of "shamanic enlightenment" (Pearson 2002, 142).

As well as inducing a trance state drums can be used by the shaman in divination. The "troll drums" of the Saami are covered in elaborate illustrations of animals, humans and depictions of the cosmos (fig 4) (Vitebsky 1995, 80). Divination is performed by observing a collection of metal rings known as a frog which, jump in correspondence with the drum's harmonics (ibid). Shamans also interpret their dreams in order to foretell the outcome of an illness, the onset of bad weather, crop failures as well as the fertility of both humans and animals (ibid., 105).

Various hallucinogenic substances are used by shamans to enter altered states of consciousness. Narcotic intoxication is also symbolic of death as in the altered state of consciousness the individual leaves his or her physical body and for a short time becomes part of the spirit world (Stutley 2004, 16). The Chukchi claim that the consumption of the magic mushroom fly agaric (*Amanita muscaria*) leads people along the crooked path to the land of the dead (ibid., 20). For shamans, psychotropic plants are considered to be spiritual teachers and so by ingesting or inhaling them, they imbue themselves with the spirit's properties (Vitebsky 1995, 85).

Another way of producing an altered state of consciousness is through asphyxiation. The Khazars method of initiation for a new ruler was ceremonial strangulation during which, the initiate would enter a "state of unconsciousness short of death so that he might become a medium for the receipt and communication of oracles" (Mason, 1995, 397). Before entering trance, the Canadian Eskimo shaman must be semi naked with his hands tied behind his back and his head lashed to his knees (Jakobsen 1999, 140).



Figure 2: Saami Noaide with Runic drum (pinterest.com 2014).

## 2.2. THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

The earliest archaeological evidence for the possibility of shamanic practice in Eurasia comes from the interpretation of cave paintings such as those found at Chauvet dating to the Aurignacian period around 31,000 years ago (Dowson and Porr 2004, 167). Lewis-Williams claims that many of these animalistic representations were the result of attempts to fix the visions or mental images induced by the altered states of consciousness experienced by shamans (Lewis-Williams 2012, 193). He also asserts that the neurological system of humanity is universal and so the effects of altered states of consciousness are the same not only across cultures but throughout antiquity (Pearson 2002, 50).

In the sanctuary at Les Trois Freres, a palaeo cave in the French Pyrenees, an image known as 'The Dancing Sorcerer' depicts a male figure with deer antlers, the ears of a wolf, a horse's tail and paws akin to a bear (fig 5) (Vitebsky 2001, 29). Despite the conglomeration of animalistic elements, the figure also appears anthropomorphic (*ibid.*). One interpretation is that the image represents the spirit master of the animals (*ibid.*). Another interpretation is that it is a depiction of transmogrification where a zoomorphic figure emerges from an anthropomorphic one, perhaps the shaman uniting with his or her spirit guide (Aldhouse-Green 2005, 150; Vitebsky 2001, 29).

Therianthropes may have been depictions of shamans wearing animal pelts and headdresses (Aldhouse-Green and Aldhouse-Green 2005, 17-18). Siberian shamans used headdresses made with either real deer antlers or effigy antlers made of iron (Romain 2009, 42). Horns have also been used and these are believed to be the seat of the shaman's power (*ibid.*). Archaeologically, antler headdresses have been found in places such as Ohio in the USA the home of the 2000 year old Native American Hopewell culture and the Mesolithic site of Starr Carr in Yorkshire, England (fig 4) (*ibid.*, 3).



Figure 3: Dancing Sorcerer (after Lewis-Williams 2012, 12)



**Figure 4: Illustrative representation of how Starr Carr headdress may have been worn**  
**(Aldhouse-Green and Aldhouse-Green 2005, 6)**

Shamanism appears to have been a significant part of the religious belief systems of the hunter gatherers of the Palaeolithic and Mesolithic, but what archaeological evidence is there for shamanic practice in the Neolithic and beyond? One theory proposed by, among others, David Lewis-Williams, involves the shamanic use of the megalithic tombs of the Neolithic. Lewis-Williams has conjectured that these ancient stone tombs were constructed to replicate caves in which, altered states of consciousness were attained by shamans, possibly through the use of hallucinogenic substances or by other means (Dronfield 1995, 548; Lewis-Williams and Pearce 2009, 222-223). The tombs may have provided the right conditions such as isolation and darkness for the practice of shamanic rituals and practice (Aldhouse-Green and Aldhouse-Green 2005, 80).

Paleobotanical evidence for the possible use of plants with hallucinogenic properties has been found at Etton a Neolithic causewayed enclosure near Maxey and Redlands Farm long barrow, Northamptonshire (Williams 2010, 106; Harding and Healy 2011, xxiv). In both cases, opium poppy seeds were identified. It is believed that the opium poppy may have been introduced into Britain from the near east around the 4th millennium BC (*ibid.*). Poppy seeds have also been recovered from Swiss Neolithic lake villages (Aldhouse-Green and Aldhouse-Green 2005, 85-86). These sites may have

been seen as zones outside of time and space where shamanic rituals involving the ingestion of mind altering substances transported ritual practitioners to the perceived other worlds (Williams 2010, 106-107).

The Bronze age Ralaghan wooden figure from County Cavan (plate 4) whose gender is ambiguous, may have been designed to represent the shaman's ability to vacillate between genders and to traverse the cosmic planes (Aldhouse-Green and Aldhouse-Green 2005, 120). The figure has a pubic hole which could equally be construed as either a penis socket or vulva (*ibid.*). A small deposit of quartz was discovered in the genital hole and as stated previously, this is a stone thought to be imbued with magical power (VanPool 2009, 183).

**Plate 4: Sexually ambiguous Irish Bronze age wooden figure from Ralaghan, Co. Cavan (Brennan 2014).**



In a cavern at Byci Skala in the Czech Republic the disarticulated remains of forty individuals, mostly female, were found along with the bones of a dismembered horse all of which, dated to the Iron Age (Williams 2010, 232). The Byci Skala site also calls to mind the Siberian shaman Dyukhede's experiences of being dismembered and boiled in a cauldron by the naked man in a cave (Vitebsky 1995, 60). Dismemberment and deposition into liminal places such as caves, rivers, lakes and bogs appears to be a common feature of the Iron Age. Many of the bog body finds have been disarticulated remains such as legs, decapitated heads and in the case of Oldcroghan Man a disembowelled torso (Kelly 2006, 26; Kelly 2012, 236).

The Gundestrup silver cauldron, dating to the 2nd century BC and thought to be of Thracian origin was found in a bog, in Jutland, Denmark close to the Borremose bog bodies (Aldhouse Green 2001, 114; Williams 2003, 106). It has been suggested that the images found on the cauldron are representations of a trance induced "shamanic dreamscape" (Aldhouse-Green and Aldhouse-Green 2005, 155). Timothy Taylor points to one figure in particular who sits cross-legged in what Taylor has interpreted as a trance state (Taylor 1996, 218). He claims that the figure's pose is similar to one used in Tantric Yoga, which, focuses on animal energies (*ibid.*). The figure is of indeterminate sex, wears

an antlered headdress and has been identified as the Celtic god Cernunnos (fig 5) (*ibid*, 217). Surrounded by animals he/she holds a neck ring in his/her right hand, while holding on to a ram headed snake with the left hand (fig 6) (*ibid*.). In shamanism the snake is a magical animal and a receptacle for the dead or an epiphany of the gods which can reveal the future (Elaide 2004, 98).



**Figure 5:** Bas relief of the Celtic god Cernunnos found under Notre Dame Cathedral, Paris (*Knight 1987, 5-7*).



**Figure 6:** Cross legged anthropomorphic figure wearing an antlered headdress (after Aldhouse-Green 2005, 154)

In Siberia, wooden figures embody the spirits of their ancestors who guard the shaman on his or her cosmological journey (Aldhouse-Green and Aldhouse-Green 2005, 121). During the Iron Age, many wooden figurines similar to the Bronze Age Ralaghan figure, have been found in bogs often close to trackways or toghers (*ibid*.). One such figure was built into the foundations of an Iron Age trackway in bog at Corlea, County Longford (*ibid*.). The half anthropomorphic half zoomorphic figure had been carved from an ash tree and in common with Bronze Age Ralaghan figure, its gender is also ambiguous (plate 5) (*ibid*.).

The Ballachulish oak figure (730-520 BC) (plate 5) from the West Highlands in Scotland has been interpreted as a representation of a female fertility deity and was unearthed during peat cutting in 1880 (Christison 1881, 158). Interestingly like the Bronze Age Ralaghan idol, quartz was incorporated into the figure although, in this case, it was used to provide eyes. The pubic region is enlarged and the figure appears to be holding a wand or phallus (Aldhouse-Green 2004, 90-91; ScARF 2014). The

Ballachulish figure was found face down in the peat and had been pinned into the peat with wickerwork and poles (Aldhouse-Green 2001, 121 and Williams 2010, 234). Another anthropomorphic wooden figure known as Broddenbjerg man (760 - 410 BC) (plate 5) also with enlarged genitalia was discovered in a bog near Viborg in Denmark in 1881 (Fischer 2012, 167).



**Plate 5: Corlea figure (left), Balachullish Figure (centre) and Broddenbjerg man (right) (Brennan 2014; after ScARF 2014; after Glob 1975, illus.75).**

Miranda Aldhouse Green has suggested that wooden figures such as these served as entrance markers to the other worlds or, as in the case of the Siberian wooden figures, guardians protecting the shaman on his otherworldly journey (Aldhouse-Green and Aldhouse-Green 2005, 142). She has also suggested that these figures may have been surrogates for human sacrifice as they have been treated in a similar manner to many of the bog bodies (Aldhouse-Green 2005, 92).

### 2.3: COMPARISONS WITH THE DRUIDS

Irish scholar and folklorist Daithí Ó'hÓgáin claimed that the druid of Celtic culture inherited the functions associated with the shaman (Ó'hÓgáin 1999, 73). Like shamans they would have been perceived as intermediaries between society and the "mysterious powers of destiny" (*ibid.*). It is uncertain that all the Celtic peoples of Iron Age Europe had druids as a learned caste as most of the evidence that exists comes from Gaul (fig 7) (*ibid.*, 69-70).



Figure 7: Druid in judicial costume (Knight 1987, 9).

Diogenes Laertius, who was a Greek writer of the 2nd century BC, asserts that the Celts and Galatians had, within their societies, seers whom they referred to as *druidaei* and *semnotheoi*. The word *semnotheoi* maybe a borrowing of the word shaman which, as alluded to earlier, has its origins in the Turko-Mongolian languages (ibid., 70). Certainly by the third century BC a formalised socioreligious system had begun to develop and the druids may have taken over the roles that in earlier societies would have been filled by community shamans (Williams 2010, 194). Early Irish literature also refers to those who officiated at sacred rites as druids (ibid., 71).

Strabo describes three classes of men given special honour including the *bardoi* who were singers and poets, the *ovateis* who performed divination and the *druidai* who were involved in the science of nature as well as philosophy (O'hOgain 1999, 72). Diodorus proposed that a human sacrifice was an offering of thanksgiving which required the presence of the druids as they were the mediators between the mortal world and the world of spirit (fig 8) (Aldhouse Green 2001, 187-189).



Figure 8: Group of arch druids (Knight 1987, 5)

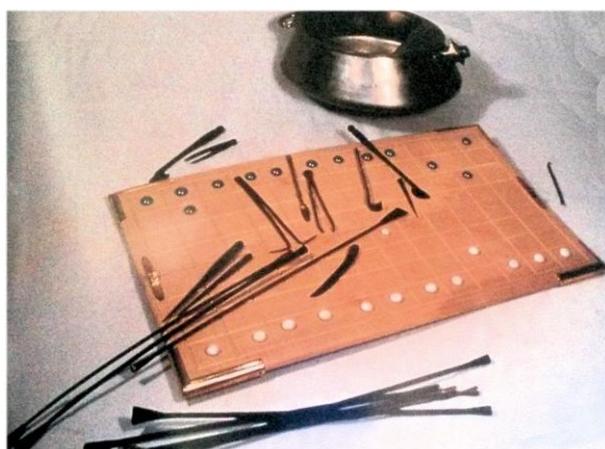
Julius Caesar wrote that the Druids believed the soul did not die with the body but instead passed into other bodies (Knight 1987, 7). Other classical writers such as Ammianus Marcellinus state that the druids believed that the spirits of the dead continued to exist in another world (ibid.). Classical writers recount three gods in particular Teutates, Taranis and Esus that required sacrifices involving drowning, burning and hanging respectively (Williams 2010, 194). Pliny, Strabo and Lucan claimed that the druids were also healers, prophets, diviners, counsellors and magicians (Hutton 1998, 170-171). These descriptions of druidic spiritual beliefs and their roles within their communities are very similar to how one might describe the role of shamans in many cultures both in the present and the past (Aldhouse-Green and Aldhouse-Green 2005, 189).

A major drawback in finding possible elements of European shamanism in druidic practices is that, many of the texts that do exist are for the most part written after the breakdown of the various components of druidism into poet, judge, healer and latterly Christian priest (Jones 1998, 70). The Irish law tracts and annals indicate that poets took over the functions of the druid after the introduction of Christianity and there are references to poetic ecstasies (ibid.). Having been converted to Christianity many druids would have then become monks who, possessing a common spiritual ground, imbued the new religion with aspects of the old beliefs such as the "lore of places" *dindshenchas* (Campbell 1982, 8; Bamford 1982, 175).

Irish medieval stories make indisputable references to the association between blacksmithing and shamanistic druidry (Aldhouse Green and Aldhouse Green 2005, 132). Like shamans, while being central to the community, the blacksmith is also a marginal character and a boundary crosser (*ibid.*, 131). As previously mentioned, references to blacksmithing are also found in the story of Siberian shaman Dyukhede (Vitebsky 2001, 60; Aldhouse Green and Aldhouse Green 2005, 132). A link shown clearly in Irish writing is illustrated in the following extract from *Scela Eogain*:

*"When Cormac was born the Druid-smith Olc Aiche put five protective circles about him against wounding, against drowning, against fire, against enchantment, against wolves and evil." (ibid., 132).*

Divination is an essential element of the 'shamanic package' and there are many accounts of certain druids being particularly skilled in the practice (Aldhouse-Green and Aldhouse-Green 2005, 136). One such individual was the druid and statesman Diviciacus from Gaul, who was described by the Roman writer Cicero as, extremely skilled in divination (Aldhouse-Green and Aldhouse-Green 2005, 137). Although it cannot be proven conclusively, some archaeological artefacts such as the divining rods from the Doctor's grave (50 AD) (plate 6) at Stanway in Essex or the Gaulish Coligny calendar are thought to have been used by the druids to foretell the future and calculate the times for religious festivals (*ibid.*).



**Plate 6: Divining rods from the Doctor's Grave excavation at Stanway Essex, England. The pot also contained a hallucinogenic substance in its spout (after Aldhouse-Green and Aldhouse-Green 2005, 159).**

Classical writers also refer to the druids using human sacrificial victims for divination purposes (Aldhouse-Green 2001, 82). Diodorus described a particularly gruesome ritual where the victim is stabbed in or near the diaphragm whereupon the druid foretells the future by observing the direction of the blood flow and twitching of the dying victims limbs (*ibid.*, 83). Tacitus refers to druids examining the viscera of sacrificial victims for prophetic purposes (Taylor 2003, 156). Diodorus claimed that no sacrifice was performed without the presence of the druids for it was they who convened with the gods in order to seek their blessings (Hutton 2009, 6).

However, Leslie Ellen Jones has suggested that shamanism is more likely to be found among the warrior kings than the druids because in the medieval texts it they who journey to the other worlds (Jones 1998, 82). It is recorded in the 8th century text "The Erainn at Tara" that the warrior lord and king of Tara, Conaire was related to shape shifting ancestral beings and that he acquired the throne with the help of the druids (Ó'hÓgáin 1999, 159). Ann Ross has interpreted Lindow Man II as a prince who was also a druidic novitiate (Ross and Robins 1991, 53).

In conclusion, it would seem that shamanic practices have been an integral part of many belief systems both in the present and throughout antiquity. Shamans can be described as individuals who have been chosen as intermediaries between this world and the supposed other worlds. They achieve this through entering an altered state of consciousness induced either by the ingestion of hallucinogens or other means. Much of what shamans do involves spectacle and performance. Shamanic rituals allow the shaman to convey his or her otherworldly experiences and to demonstrate the skills he or she has developed as part of their spiritual journeys. Druids can also be interpreted as shamans since they too played an important role as spiritual intermediaries and ritual practitioners in their communities although there is no mention in the texts of druids travelling to other worlds (Jones 1998, 82). Many of the bog bodies belong to a period that is contemporary with the druids and the following chapters will look at how elements of shamanic/druidic practice may have played a role in their treatment and deposition.

## CHAPTER 3: THE THEORIES

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### 3.1: DEATH BY ACCIDENT, NATURAL CAUSES OR MURDER.

There are multifarious and numerous theories regarding how and why human remains came to be deposited in bogs. Some of these are more pedestrian than others. Bogs are vast empty places where it is more than possible that people may have simply got lost, became trapped and then accidentally drowned (Chamberlain and Parker-Pearson 2001, 54). One imaginative archaeologist suggested that the ropes around the necks of some victims were the result of failed rescue attempts (*ibid.*, 54).

It has been proposed that a number of bog bodies may, in fact, have died from natural causes, and the evidence for this is the manner of their interment. There are examples of individuals being wrapped in textiles or furs along with grave goods (Ravn 2010, 117). German archaeologist Michael Gebühr has speculated that the juvenile bog body known as Windeby I from Schleswig-Holstein (once thought to be a young female but now thought to be male) may have died of starvation or as a result of chronic illness (Lange 2007; Asingh 2007, 305). The cause of death could not be established, but x-rays of the Windeby I body's long bones showed Harris lines, an indicator of growth arrest, suggesting that he or she had periodically suffered from a disease, malnourishment or both (Fischer 2012, 137). Furthermore Windeby I was surrounded by four pottery vessels which would have been consistent with normal Iron Age burial (plate 7) (*ibid.*, 137).

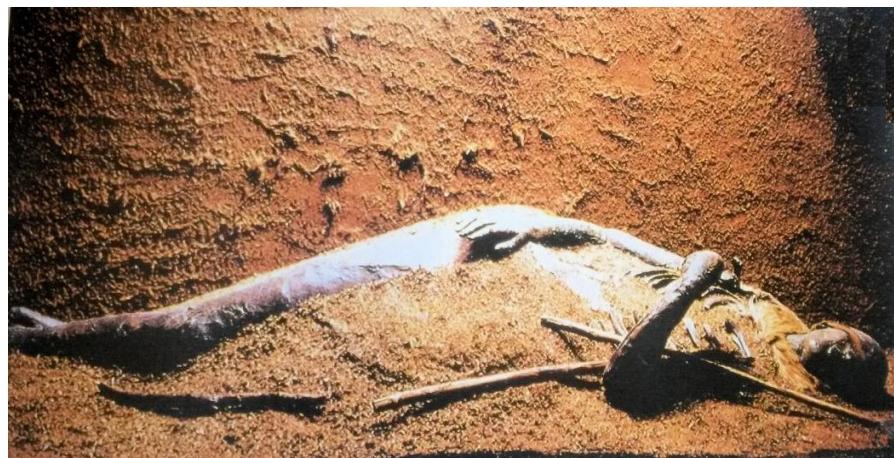


Plate 7: Windeby I (Deem 1998, 13)

There is also the theory that, in some cases, they may have been the victims of foul play, murdered surreptitiously (Chamberlain and Parker Pearson 2001, 54). Some of the bog bodies have multiple injuries that could have been inflicted by individuals or groups of assailants (*ibid.*). However, most of the data surrounding bog bodies whether it is archaeological, forensic or historical indicates that some form of ritual activity was involved in a high percentage of cases (Chamberlain and Parker Pearson 2001, 53-54). This has led archaeologists to concur that prehistoric bog body deposition, for the most part, is a result of ritual sacrifice or execution (*ibid.*).

### 3.2: PUNISHMENT/EXECUTION

A large number of those placed in the bogs show signs that they were singled out for treatment that was degrading and inhumane (Williams 2003 96). Many were the victims of savage violence, while a large number were deposited naked or semi naked usually with nothing in the way of grave goods or perhaps one or two token items (*ibid.*). Some had their heads shaved or scalped and in other instances post-mortem examinations revealed privations in their diet at least in the final hours of their lives (*ibid.*, 97). Together with historical accounts, these factors have led to the theory of punishment by execution (*ibid.*).

One historical account in particular comes from 'The Agricola and Germania' by the Roman general and geographer Tacitus, who lived during the 1st century AD. (Chamberlain and Parker-Pearson 2001, 79). The following translated quote appears to give credence to the execution theory.

*"Before the General Assembly criminals may be charged and tried for their lives. Traitors and renegades are hung from a tree. Cowards, recreants and infamous wretches are pressed under hurdles into the slime of a morass and suffocated." (Townshend, R. B. 1894, 64-65).*

Tacitus is describing the punishments meted out by the kings and chieftains of the Germanic tribes to those who violated their laws. He goes on to state that the methods of execution were not meaningless and that criminals were executed publically while, what he calls "abominations", were buried out of sight (*ibid.*).

In the text, the Latin phrase *corpore infamis* has been translated as cowards, shirkers and sodomites (Chamberlain and Parker-Pearson 2001, 79). Accordingly, this has been interpreted as an allusion to homosexuality. The two Weerdinge Men (plate 8) from the Netherlands found arm in arm have been used to support Tacitus's account although van der Sanden has rejected this on the grounds that the men were carefully laid in the bog (Taylor 2003, 159). He has suggested instead that they may have been brothers or relatives (*ibid.*). Furthermore, another Roman writer, Athenaeus claimed that, a good number of Iron Age men were homosexual, suggesting that homosexuality was not a crime in these societies (Williams 2003, 97).

The definition of *corpore infamis* is "disreputable in body"

or "stained with abominable vices" (Chamberlain and Parker-Pearson 2001, 79).

A large proportion of the bog bodies from Northern Europe had some form of deformity including the Dutch Yde Girl, who suffered from scoliosis (curvature of the spine) and Zweeloo Woman also from the Netherlands whose limbs were exceptionally short (Parker-Pearson 2012, 71). Romans, such as Julius Caesar, viewed the deformed or disabled as morally degenerate, making them legitimate victims for sacrifice (*ibid.*). Plato judged that the physical condition of the body was related to the ascent of the soul and Cicero asserted that the body form determined the shape of the soul (Sullivan 2001, 263). So for Tacitus, the *corpore infamis* may have included those who were deformed or disabled in some way and therefore, associated with perversion and immorality (Trentin 2001, 202).

Tacitus also makes reference to the treatment of adulterous wives. The cuckolded husband shaves his unfaithful wife's head, strips her naked, throws her out of the house and then flogs her through the village, in full view of their kinsmen and community (Townshend 1894, 71). The beating and hair cutting does bear some similarity with certain bog bodies, such as the scalped Borremose Woman



**Plate 8: Weerdinge Couple (after Deem 1998, 21)**

from Denmark (Fischer 2012, 129). Nonetheless, while his account of the adulterous wife's treatment may seem extreme, it is corporal rather than capital in nature.

Interestingly Tacitus observes that the German tribes regarded limiting the number of the family or putting to death later born infants as an abomination (Townshend 1894, 71). The Danish Borresmose woman and the Derrymaquin Woman from County Roscommon in Ireland were both deposited with young infants, in all probability their own (Williams 2003, 98). It could be construed that these women were executed for infanticide and deposited with their murdered babies, or that the babies were also put to death because they were the offspring of their mother's adulterous liaisons (*ibid.*).

Nevertheless, despite some correlations between the physical evidence and historical texts it should be kept in mind that many of these literary sources relate to later periods (Chamberlain and Parker-Pearson 2001, 79). Furthermore, even though the writings of Tacitus date to the 1st century AD, his accounts are second or third hand as well as being politically biased (*ibid* 79). Moreover, if bogs were considered otherworldly and hence sacred places, it would seem implausible that criminals and social outcasts would be placed there (Williams 2003, 98).

### 3.3: SACRIFICES TO INVOKE OR APPEASE THE GODS.

The word sacrifice comes from the Latin meaning "to make holy". The act of sacrifice involves a relationship between the giver and the receiver, typically a supernatural entity (Aldhouse-Green 2001, 19). Some form of gift is usually given, in order to elicit a particular benefit or response from the entity either for an individual or a community (Aldhouse Green 2001, 20). This gift can be given as a form of thanksgiving, appeasement or reparation (*ibid.*). With respect to the bog bodies, if they were criminals, outcasts or prisoners of war their crimes or misdemeanours may well have angered the gods sufficiently to make them legitimate targets for sacrifice (Taylor 2003, 159). Adam of Bremen, a German missionary writer of the 11th century, recounts the story of Walfred, an English missionary who broke images of the Viking god Thor in the temple of Uppsala (Glob 1975, 115). For his crime, he was hung and then sunk in a marsh (*ibid.*).

As stated previously historical accounts such as these were written centuries after the bog bodies met their fate and should, therefore, be interpreted with caution. Furthermore, if those deposited in the bogs were common criminals one would expect to find lower class individuals among them (Taylor 2003, 159). In fact, the contrary is true as all the indications are that they were high status people evidenced by their callous free hands and well manicured fingernails (*ibid.*). Tim Taylor postulates that the fate of the bog bodies may have been a form of punishment and execution reserved for those of high status rather than common criminals (*ibid.*).

Danish archaeologist Professor P.V Glob interpreted the bog bodies as sacrifices to the earth mother or fertility goddess Nerthus (fig 9) (Parker Pearson 2012, 67). The attendants of Nerthus were drowned in a sacred lake because, having touched her holy cloth, they would have to be killed in order to retain the secrecy of the cultic rites (Aldhouse Green 2001, 144). It was believed that her passing, which usually took place on a wheeled cart, brought fertility to the land (Monaghan 2004, 355). The bog that held Tollund Man and Elling woman also revealed a wooden trackway and it is thought possible that this was used to deposit both bodies (Fischer 2012, 99).

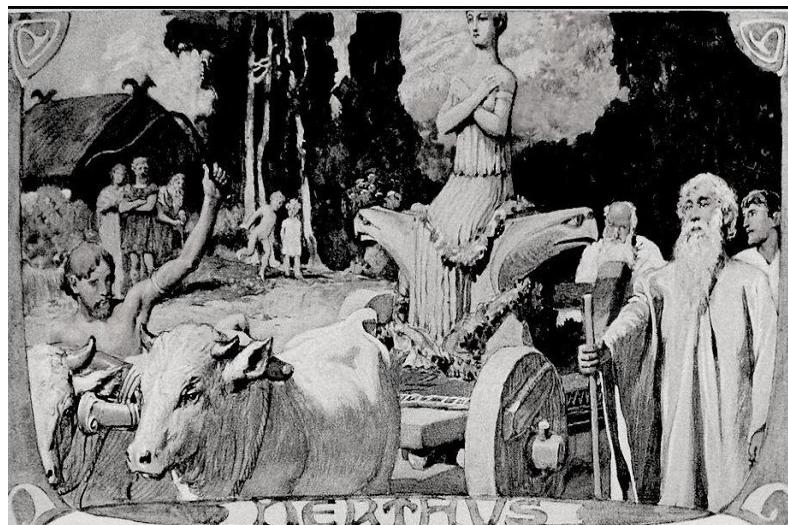
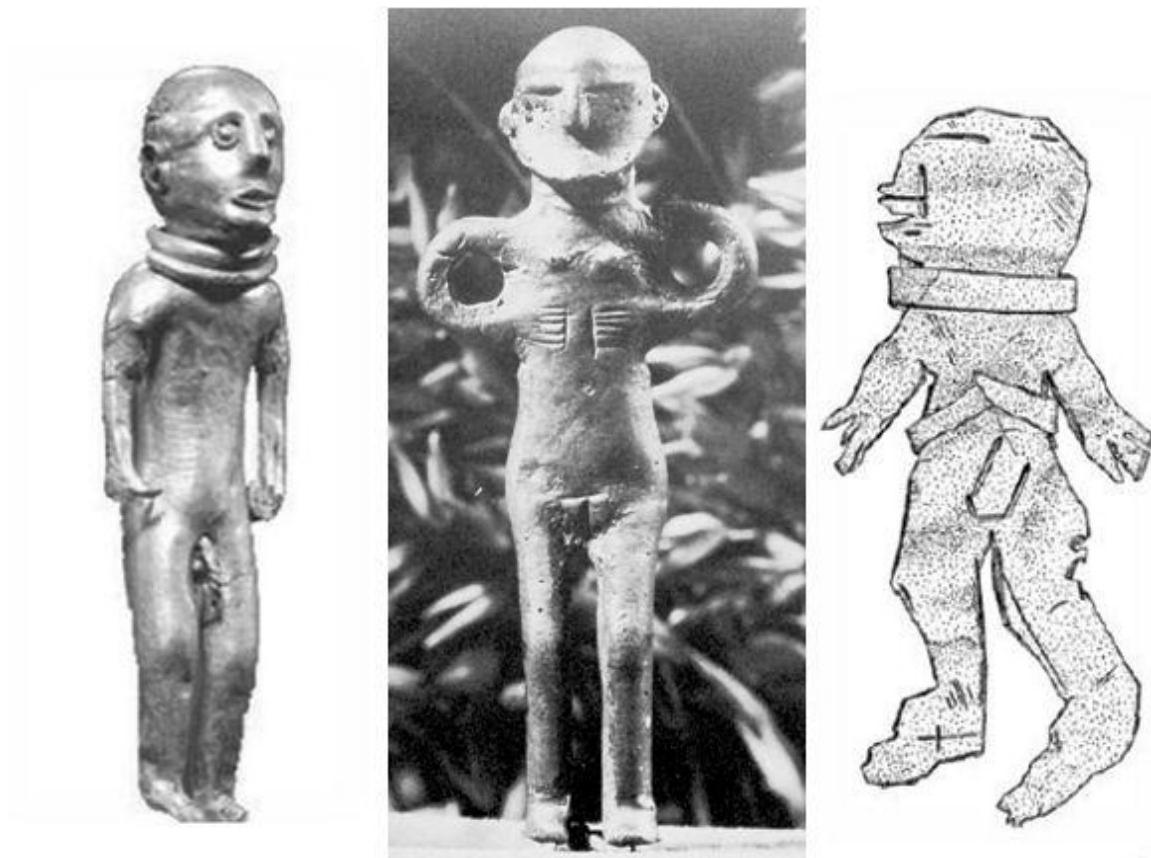


Figure 9: Depiction of Nerthus by Emil Doepler 1902 ([www.germanicmythology.com](http://www.germanicmythology.com)).

A Bronze Age fertility goddess figurine found in Viksø bog, Denmark is depicted naked wearing only a double twisted collar around her neck (plate 9) (Glob 1975, 119). The fertility goddess continues to be depicted in this manner throughout the Celtic Iron Age (*ibid.*). Many of the bog bodies were

hanged or garrotted and Glob conjectured that the noose found, for example, around Tollund Man's neck was a symbol of the fertility goddess's neck ring (*ibid.*). His death by this method ensured his communion with her, in turn ensuring a good harvest or perhaps deliverance from a bad harvest which would have resulted in famine and starvation for his community (*ibid.*). There are later examples of figures wearing neck rings perhaps indicating continuity of religious belief and practice (Nordgren 2004, 510). These include the 6th century AD gold man unearthed in Slipshavn Skog, Denmark in 1981 and the gold figure from Sorte Muld, Bornholm, also Denmark, both of which bear a striking resemblance to Tollund Man (plate 9) (Nordgren 2004, 510; Watt 2005, 200).



**Plate 9:** Gold man from Slipshavn Skog, Nyborg (left), Bronze Age goddess from Viksø bog (centre) Cut out figure from Sorte Muld similar in appearance to Tollund Man (right) (after: Nordgren 2004, 510, Glob 1975, illus. 52; Watt 2005, 200).

The brutal deaths endured by some of those consigned to the bogs have been viewed as overkill or what is also known as the triple death (Ross 1986, 162). Sacrifices were made to three Celtic gods, Teutates the God of the tribes and People, Esus Lord Master and Taranis the god of thunder and fire (ibid.).



**Figure 10: Bas relief of the Celtic god Esus found under Notre Dame Cathedral, Paris (Knight 1987, 5)**

Sacrifices to Teutates involved drowning in a cauldron possibly filled with water from a sacred well or a fermented beverage (ibid.). Esus (fig 10) required his victims to be hanged and stabbed, while the sacrificial victims of Taranis were burned (ibid.). In Celtic folklore, these gruesome deaths were usually foretold by the druids or seers (ibid.).

Lindow man from Cheshire in England appears to fit the triple death model (Aldhouse-Green 2001, 124). Post-mortem examination of his body revealed that his head had been fractured in two places, he was then garrotted and finally his throat was cut (Bourke 1986, 51). It is presumed that he was a high ranking individual since, like so many of the bog bodies, his fingernails were neatly manicured and he also appeared to be well nourished (Stead 1986, 177). More recently medical investigations in Denmark have disputed the triple death theory (Fischer 2012, 132). Instead, the pressure placed on bog bodies, such as Grauballe Man and the Borremose bodies, by the compacted peat is thought to be the culprit of skeletal damage such as bone fractures rather than blows from blunt instruments (ibid.).

Danish archaeologist Paul Lauring in his book 'Land of Tollund Man' states that death by hanging was a sacred act, not a punishment, even though criminals may have sometimes been used as sacrificial victims (Lauring 1957, 137). It was a way of "consigning man to the gods" and this ultimate sacrifice reinvigorated both man and god (*ibid.*). He also remarks on a widespread custom where the king or chieftain, who was also a priest, would sacrifice himself when he became too old, infirm or ineffective (*ibid.*). Since he was the gods' closest associate among mortals, this was seen as the greatest of all sacrifices (*ibid.*). As previously stated, the un-calloused hands and manicured fingernails of many bog bodies have been interpreted as indicators of privilege and status (Williams 2003, 98).

### 3.4: POLITICAL SACRIFICES, KINGSHIP AND SOVEREIGNTY.

It is recorded in the 8th century text "The Erainn at Tara" that the warrior lord and king of Tara, Conaire was related to shape shifting ancestral beings and that he acquired the throne with the help of the druids (Ó'hÓgáin 1999, 159). The role of the priestly class and its connection to the otherworld seems to be central to kingship in ancient Irish texts (*ibid.*, 160). Eamonn Kelly, Keeper of Antiquities at the National Museum of Ireland, believes that the Irish bog bodies, along with artefactual deposition are located on ancient territorial and liminal boundaries. He goes on to claim that this strategic positioning is related to sovereignty, sacral kingship and inauguration (Kelly 2006, 30).

Kelly claims that Irish bog bodies such as Clonycavan Man and Oldcroghan Man were likely interred on important ancient barony boundaries and that they were possibly royal pretenders (Kelly 2006, 26). If they had been usurpers their deaths on a practical level may have been a form of revolutionary execution in order to warn future contenders of what would happen to them should they revolt (*ibid.*, 30). Like Lauring and Glob, Kelly also connects the deposition of the bog bodies with ancient fertility rites. Although there are limited references to human sacrifice in early Irish literature one reference does link human sacrifice with the god Crom Dubh or Cruaich and the harvest festival of Lungnasa (*ibid.*).

*"They would kill their piteous, wretched offspring, with much wailing and peril, to pour their blood around Cromm Cruaich. Milk and corn they would ask from him speedily. In return for a third of their healthy issue. Great was the horror and fear of him. To him noble Gaels would prostrate themselves" (MacCulloch 1911, 79).*

Kelly argues that the votive deposition of such things as the bog butter, sickles and quernstones found in places such as Lisnacrogher bog, County Antrim are contextual with Oldcroghan Man's last meal of buttermilk and cereal, two crucial components of the ancient diet (Kelly 2006, 27). The kings of Connaught were said to be married to the earth goddess or mother as part of their inauguration (Waddell 2009, 1). This supernatural union being symbolic of their marriage to the land and its people (*ibid.*). Since sacrifice to the gods and execution are not mutually exclusive, it would appear that the killing of these individuals not only enabled expedient removal of political advisories by the ruling elite it also insured a good harvest for the community. However it is unlikely that their judgement and execution would have been ordered by the ruling king or chieftain.

Dion Chrysostom a Greek philosopher of the 1st century AD observed that Celtic kings dare not execute a plan or try to resolve a situation without first consulting with their druids (Ó'hÓgáin 1999, 81). In the Ulster Cycle it states that the king was not allowed to speak to an assembly before his druids (*ibid.*). These early historical texts would appear to support the idea that in antiquity there was an overlapping of temporal and spiritual power. This implies that the real political power was in the hands of religious leaders rather than secular ones.

### 3.5: WIEDERGANGERS (AGAIN WALKERS)

In German folklore the souls of individuals who had committed crimes, or those who had died violently, whether it is through suicide or at the hands of another, were said to become zombies or ghosts (van der Sanden 1995, 148). Since their souls were too restless for normal burial, a particular form of treatment and deposition was required in order to render them undisruptive (*ibid.*).

Nakedness and humiliation followed by, decapitation and dismemberment were thought to prevent them from returning in order to haunt the living (*ibid.*). Archaeologist K. W. Struve proposed that this was the case for a German bog body known as Dätgen Man whose decapitated head was found three metres away from his body (*ibid.*). He had also been stabbed and wooden stakes had been used to peg his remains into the bog (*ibid.*).

Timothy Taylor concurs with this hypothesis, particularly with regard to criminals. He has suggested that in some instances the transgressions of the individuals who became bog bodies, may have been perceived to be so serious that they required complete exclusion from both the mortal world and the spirit world (Taylor 2003, 165). In this situation normal execution and burial would not suffice as the punishment would be short lived, with the individuals re-emerging in the other world (*ibid.*). Similarly, if they were not given proper burial rites, their spirits could remain earthbound where they would haunt the living (*ibid.*, 166). Taylor claims the solution was to place the malefactors in the liminal environment of the bog, betwixt and between worlds (*ibid.*). For this to be achieved he argues that they would need to be brought to the edge of death several times and in a variety of ways in order to confuse the soul (*ibid.*). In this confused state their souls would linger within their mortal remains, the preservative nature of the bog ensuring both body and soul remained in limbo for eternity (*ibid.*).

### 3.6: THE BOG BODIES AS SHAMANS.

The extreme violence inflicted on the bog bodies would have made their deaths unforgettable for all those who witnessed the atrocities perpetrated against these ill-fated individuals (Williams 2003, 90). Mike Williams suggests that the bog bodies were players in a macabre theatre of death where, the excessive violence meted out to them was part of the spectacle that would become integral to the collective social memory of the community (*ibid.*, 90-93). In other words, people would have understood and remembered the ritual that was taking place before them as part of their tradition and culture (*ibid.*, 94). He goes on to claim that theatrical death has historically been a part of other cultures around the world (*ibid.*, 93).

One example of theatrical death, cited by Williams, is the story of the three concubines of a nineteenth century Balinese Rajah, who, upon his death, offered themselves as sacrificial victims in a ritual known as suttee (Geertz 1983, 37-39). They consented to this because they had been promised that they would be the chosen wives of the Rajah in the afterlife. As part of the funeral rite and in front of 50,000 spectators, they threw themselves onto the cremation pyre from a bridge above it (*ibid.*). Williams also refers to the story of the ceremonial ship funeral of a 10th century Rus chieftain, witnessed by the Arabic chronicler Ibn Fadlan, in which a slave girl, not unlike the Balinese concubines, consented to be sacrificed in order to "be with her master" (Williams 2003, 93-94; Taylor 2003, 13). Her ultimate fate was to be brutally raped, strangled, repeatedly stabbed and then cremated with the Rus chieftain (Taylor 2003, 93). Williams puts forward the idea that, like the slave girl and the concubines, the bog bodies were also voluntary victims of their horrendous demise.

Mike Parker Pearson has suggested that the people found in the bogs could have included witches, shamans and priests (Parker-Pearson 2012, 71). He also states that some of them may have been chosen because they had physical deformities or disabilities, mental illness or other traits that would have set them apart from society (*ibid.*). These individuals are often said to be "touched by the gods" (*ibid.*). In ethnographic instances deformed children are regularly chosen as shamans (Schmidt 1987, 63). Furthermore, they are usually very gifted and perceptive people (*ibid.*). Eliade refers to shamanism as "a mysticism at the disposal of a particular elite" (Vitebsky 1995, 120). Among the Inuits of Arctic Canada shamans are considered to be neither male nor female but a third gender and their ambiguous apparel further reflects their separateness from the other two genders (Hollimon 2004, 124-125).

With this in mind Williams claims that the bog bodies are the remains of people who were ritual specialists chosen by their communities to interact with the other worlds on their behalf, as is the case with ethnographic shamans . Although ethnographic shamans also undergo a dramatic and ritualistic form of death, this is a symbolic death of the soul that takes place only in the altered state of consciousness and results in rebirth (Williams 2003, 103). This inner drama needs to be conveyed to

an audience in order to be effective and this is done through performance (Vitebsky 1995, 123). For Williams the ritual killing of the bog bodies was a physical re-enactment of the shaman's spiritual death that ultimately would imprint the shaman's otherworldly journey into the collective memory of the community (Williams 2003, 103).

In ethnographic shamanism the treatment of deceased shamans differs from the rest of society (Williams 2003, 106). They may be buried in a special place and this burial site then attracts votive offerings (*ibid.*). Williams proposes that the artefacts found in bogs where bodies have also been found could be evidence for a similar kind of practice (*ibid.*). However despite the fact that the Guderstrup cauldron was found close to the Boremose bog bodies in Denmark there is not really enough archaeological evidence to support this theory as generally speaking bog bodies do not tend to be deposited either with or close to artefacts (*ibid.*).

Many of the theories discussed here have similar themes and features. They deal with why people were deposited in bogs and who those people may have been, for instance, criminals, sacrifices to fertility gods and even territorial boundary markers. Most of the theories concur that ritual and religion were involved in bog body deposition, but only one hints at the possible doctrinal motivation of the ritual practitioners responsible for the killings. The theory that the bog bodies were shamans, or if not shamans themselves participants in shamanic rites is explored in more detail in the following chapters.

## **CHAPTER 4: SHAMANIC PRACTICE AND THE BOG BODIES.**

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### **4.1: NINE CHARACTERISTICS THAT MAY INDICATE SHAMANIC PRACTICE IN THE DEPOSITION OF BOG BODIES.**

Taking into consideration the distinguishing features of both historical and ethnographic shamanism, nine characteristics were chosen as indicators of possible shamanic involvement in the ante and post mortem treatment of ten prehistoric bog bodies.

#### **1. Excessive violence including dismemberment/decapitation/stabbing.**

In ethnographic shamanism the journey to the otherworld, particularly the initial one, involves decapitation and dismemberment of the body symbolic of the disintegration of the soul that needs to take place before rebirth (Williams 2010, 232). Diodorus Siculus, a Greek historian of the 1st century BC, claimed that the druids, whose ritual practices have been interpreted as shamanic, used sacrificial victims as tools of divination (Ó'hÓgáin 1999, 69-76). The victim would be stabbed above the midriff and then the future would be foretold by the convulsions of his body, the pouring of his blood and in some cases the observation of his entrails (*ibid.*, 73-74). Excessive violence is one of the most common features among the bog bodies.

#### **2. Asphyxiation manifested by the presence of ropes or garrottes.**

Trance states can be brought about through a lack of oxygen as is the case with asphyxiation (Stutley 2004, 37). The Turkish Khazars and Siberian shamans choked themselves with ropes in order to induce an ecstatic state (Mason, 1995, 397; Markowitsch 1992, 507). A mythological example that may be defined as shamanic involves the Viking god Odin who hanged himself from the Yggdrasil tree, or axis mundi in order to gain spiritual knowledge (Eliade 2004, 380). Odin means "Master of Ecstasy" and he was said to have slept as if dead, during which time he could shape shift taking the form of a bear, a wolf or bird of prey (Buchholz 1984, 428). Physiologically, partial strangulation is known to be semi hallucinogenic and can heighten sexual arousal (Uva 1995, 574-575). Asphyxiation seems to be very common among the bog bodies.

### **3. Ingestion of hallucinogens.**

The ingestion or inhalation of substances with hallucinogenic properties can be used to induce trance, an altered state of consciousness. In ethnographic shamanism narcotic intoxication represents death and is essential for the shaman's journeys to the other worlds (Stutley 2004, 16).

### **4. Physical deformities or unusual physical traits.**

Shamans are often chosen precisely because they have physical deformities or disabilities as they are believed to have been touched by the spirits (Williams 2010, 231). Among the Araucanians of Chile shamans are usually sickly with weak hearts and other ailments (Eliade 2004, 25). In the Andaman Islands epileptics are considered to be great magicians (*ibid*). Shamans may have other unusual traits that set them apart from their community such as tattoos, birthmarks, exceptional stature or perhaps sexual ambiguity (Williams 2003, 102).

### **5. Un-calloused hands and manicured fingernails.**

Shamans would have a special status in society as they are chosen by the spirits (Vitebsky 1995, 52). Eliade has referred to shamans as members of a mystical elite and Parker Pearson has also conjectured that shamans and priests would have been from the upper ranks of society (Vitebsky 1995, 120; Parker Pearson 2012, 71). As such it seems unlikely that they would have participated in manual labour. Furthermore in Inuit shamanism fingernails are important in the practice of magical rites (Brill 1982, 103).

### **6. Nakedness or semi nakedness.**

Many shamans enter the other worlds in a state of undress or semi undress (Williams 2003, 102). Before they enter a state of trance Canadian shamans must be bound and the upper part of their bodies left bare (Jakobsen 1999, 140). In other ethnographic examples there are the gymnosophs "naked sages" who are shaman priests to the Indian Brahmins (Namba-Walter and Newman-Friedman 2004, 483).

**7. Presence of capes, belts, hats and armlets made of leather, wool or fur on or near an otherwise naked body.**

In shamanism leather, wool and fur accessory clothing such as capes, hats and armlets may be worn in order to represent the shaman's animal persona which assists in his/her transportation to the world of spirit (Aldhouse-Green and Aldhouse-Green 2005, 13). This may also be symbolic of the shaman's transmogrification.

**8. Focus on the head and/or hair.**

In Celtic Iron Age culture the head was venerated as it was believed to contain an individual's spiritual force (Armit 2012, 36). The disembodied head was thought to have been connected to fertility, have regenerative properties and the ability to mediate between worlds (*ibid.*). Similarly in ethnographic shamanism the soul is also thought to be located in the head. Evenki shamans do not cut their hair because they believe the hair is where the souls of the clan live (Brill 1982, 101; Siikala and Hoppal 1998, 3). In Inuit culture hair and nails are important in the execution of magical rites (*ibid.*). The Inuits of Canada also believe that in cutting the hair one also cuts away part of the soul (Brill 1982, 103). Cutting the hair may therefore signify the freeing of the soul or conversely an incomplete soul may not be able to travel to the other worlds (Williams 2010, 233).

**9. Restraints such as wooden stakes, withies, hurdles, bindings.**

Part of the initiation rite of a shaman may involve being tied up and restrained in some manner. East Greenlanders view the binding of the shaman to be the greatest of the shamanistic feats and shaman's are sometimes found at the end of a séance to be free of their bindings apparently released by their spirit helpers (Merkur 1992, 132).

#### **4.2: NEOLITHIC AND IRON AGE CASE STUDIES**

There are at least 2000 known bog bodies from Ireland, Britain and North West Europe dating from the Mesolithic to the post medieval period. Many of these bodies would no doubt exhibit at least one or more of the characteristics outlined above. However for the purpose of this thesis eight bodies

were chosen from the Iron Age and two from the Neolithic (fleshed and skeletonised remains) as case studies. To give a broad overview and to perhaps indicate some continuity of practice bodies from Ireland, England, Denmark, Netherlands and Germany were included. They were chosen because in every instance they exhibited at least two or more characteristics that could be interpreted as shamanic in nature.

#### 4.2.1. THE BOLKILDE BODIES, DENMARK

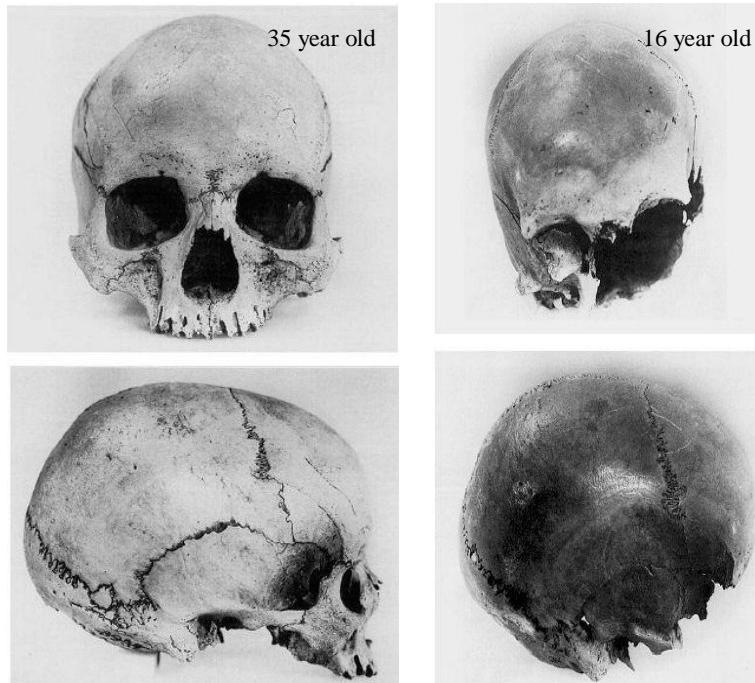


Plate 10: The two Bolkilde skulls(after Bennike *et al.* 1986, 209).

#### Description of the bodies

In 1946, the skeletonised remains of two individuals were found during peat cutting at Bolkilde Bog in Denmark (plate 10) (Bennike *et al.* 1986, 199). One of the individuals was identified as male and aged around 35 years (*ibid.*, 199). The other was a youth, also male, aged approximately 16 years (*ibid.*). A plaited rope made of vegetable fibres was found under the head of the senior individual indicating he had been hanged or strangled before being deposited in the bog (Bennike *et al.* 1986, 200). Alongside him lay three pieces of textile all three measuring around 8 x10 cm (*ibid.*, 204). Since this textile survived, but no other form of clothing was found on the bodies, it is more than

likely, they were naked. The younger male showed no signs of trauma or disease, but his proximity to the older man suggested that he had also suffered the same death (*ibid.*, 200). The bodies were dated to the early Neolithic between 3370 and 3490 BC (*ibid.*, 199). Furthermore, the older of the two individuals exhibited a deformity in his left femur in which it would have stuck out horizontally thus severely limiting his mobility (fig. 11) (*ibid.*, 202).



**Figure 11:** Drawing demonstrating the abnormality suffered by the older Bolkilde individual (after Bennike, *et al.* 1986, 202).

Bolkilde I exhibited five of the nine features while Bolkilde II exhibited two of the nine features.

#### **Bolkilde I:**

- 2. Asphyxiation by strangulation.**
- 4. Deformity**
- 6. Nakedness.**
- 7. Textile found near the body.**
- 8. Focus on the head.**

#### **Bolkilde II:**

- 2. Possible asphyxiation by strangulation.**
- 6. Nakedness.**

#### 4.2.2: OLDCROGHAN MAN, COUNTY OFFALY, IRELAND



Plate 11: Oldcroghan Man (Brennan 2014; Kelly 2006, 28).

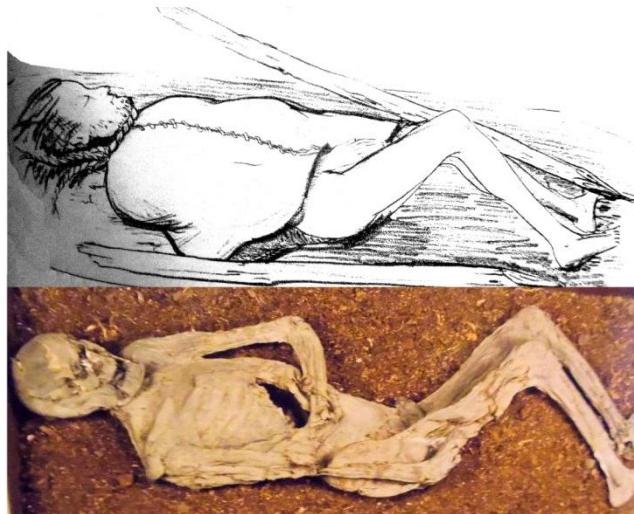
#### Description of the body

Oldcroghan Man was found in 2003 during the cutting of a drainage ditch in Clonearl bog which, is in Oldcroghan townland Co. Offaly (plate 11) (Plunket *et al.* 2008, 265). The remains were radiocarbon dated to between 362 and 175 BC (*ibid.*, 265). He had been stabbed in the chest, decapitated, disembowelled and his body severed mid torso (Kelly 2012, 236). This young man, in his mid twenties, would have been of exceptional stature and height (Asingh 2007, 314). On the basis of his arm span his height was estimated to be two metres (*ibid.*, 314). His unblemished hands and manicured fingernails indicated that he had not participated in manual labour as least for some period before his death (*ibid.*, 314). Two withies had been pushed through his upper arms presumably to hold him down in the bog and around his left arm was a leather armlet with decorated La Tene style metal mounts (plate 9) (Giles 5-7; Kelly 2012, 236). Oldcroghan man exhibited seven of the nine characteristics.

- 1. Excessive violence by dismemberment, decapitation, mutilation and stabbing.**
- 4. Unusual physical traits. He was extremely tall and powerful.**
- 5. Un-calloused hands and manicured fingernails.**
- 6. Nakedness.**
- 7. Leather armlet with metal mounts.**

- 8. Focus on the head since it had been removed from the body.**
- 9. Restraints in the form of withies pushed through his arms to secure him into the bog.**

#### 4.2.3. GALLAGH MAN, COUNTY GALWAY IRELAND



**Plate 12:** Drawing of Gallagh Man in his original condition and Gallagh Man as he is today (after Delaney 2006, 99; after Asingh 2007, 312)

#### Description of the body

Gallagh man was found in 1821 by peat cutters in County Galway (plate 12). Initially, he was in a remarkable state of preservation, his teeth described as perfect and his hair was dark brown but his remains deteriorated very quickly (plate 10 and figure 10) (Delaney 2006, 100). His remains have been dated to the 1st century BC (Asingh 2007, 312). He was naked apart from a short deerskin cape and a band of willow twigs around his neck that may have been used as a garrote to strangle him (van der Sanden 1996, 73). In the drawing the cape appears to be sewn shut, this also seems to be the case with the Danish bog body Elling Woman whose cape is also thought to have been laced together binding her within it (fig 10) (Fischer 2012, 138). Wooden stakes were found on either side of Gallagh Man's body and may have been used to hold him down in the bog (Delaney 2006, 99). Gallagh man exhibited five of the nine characteristics.

- 2. Asphyxiation with garrote made of willow.**
- 6. Semi-naked wearing only a short cape.**

- 7. Deerskin cape.**
- 8. Focus on the head as he was apparently garrotted or strangled.**
- 9. Restraints in the form of sharpened stakes on either side of the body.**

#### 4.2.4. TOLLUND MAN DENMARK



Plate 13: Tollund man, his toenail and right thumb (after Fischer 2012, 96).

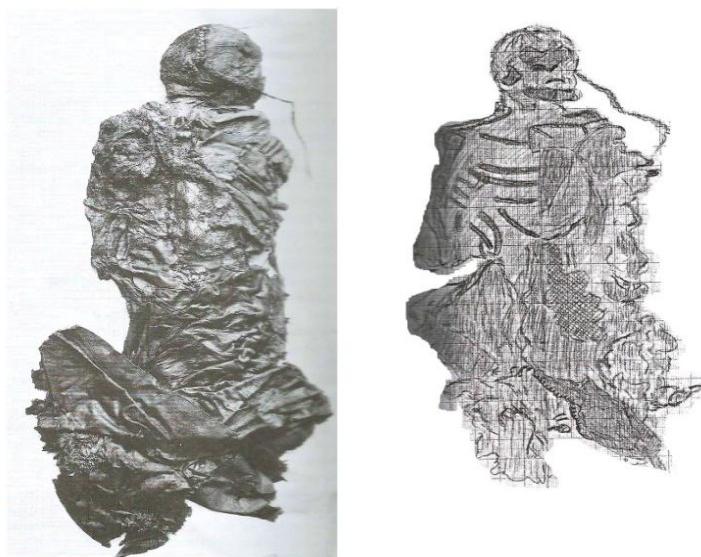
#### Description of the body

Tollund Man's body was discovered in Bjaeldskovdal bog near Silkborg, Denmark in 1950 (plate 13) (Glob 1975, 21). Radiocarbon dating of the remains suggested that he had died between 375 and 220 BC (Fischer 2012, 76). He was naked apart from a pointed leather cap on his head and an ox hide belt around his hips which lay in folds around his back (*ibid.*, 44). His hair was cut short with beard stubble present on his chin; upper lips and cheeks (*ibid.*, 39). He was approximately 161cm tall but since bog bodies shrink it is uncertain that this was his height in life (*ibid.*, 43). Tollund Man's lower arms and hands did not preserve well and were mostly skeletonised apart from his right thumb which exhibited a manicured thumbnail (*ibid.*, 102). A braided leather cord was found around his neck and its position indicated that he had been hanged rather than strangled (*ibid.*, 46). Although otherwise healthy he did have arthritic changes in his thoracic vertebrae (Aldhouse-Green 2001, 123). Tollund Man exhibited five of the nine characteristics.

- 2. Asphyxiation due to strangulation. He had been hanged using a braided leather noose.**

- 5. His right thumbnail was finely manicured.**
- 6. Naked apart from a sheepskin cap and leather belt.**
- 7. A sheepskin cap and ox hide belt.**
- 8. Focus on the head as he had been hanged.**

#### 4.2.5. ELLING WOMAN DENMARK



**Plate 14:** Elling woman back (photograph) and front (drawing) views of the remains ( after Fischer 2012, 82-83).

#### Description of the body

Elling woman was found by peat cutters in 1938 (plate 14). She had been deposited Bjaeldskovdal bog near Silkborg, Denmark, the same bog in which Tollund man would be found twelve years later (Fischer 2012, 81). Radiocarbon revealed that she had been placed there between 360 and 200 BC making her possibly contemporary with Tollund Man (*ibid.*, 87). The cause of her death was clearly defined by a hanging furrow around her neck and a leather halter found with her matched the width of the furrow (*ibid.*, 88). She was around thirty years of age when she died and would probably have had brown hair (*ibid.*). Her hair was combed backwards and held in place by a large three stranded plait that went from the top of her head to the bottom of her back (*ibid.*). It is thought that the style can only have been achieved by someone who had a very full head of hair, probably a metre in length (*ibid.*).

She was found with two leather capes (Fischer 2012, 92). The first of these she wore on her body which was otherwise naked and the second cape was wrapped around her feet (*ibid.*). A woollen belt was also found with her body (Asingh 2007, 295). In life, she had suffered from a debilitating condition known as osteoporosis (van der Sanden 1995, 141). This is a disease usually associated with postmenopausal women and involves a reduction in bone mass with the increased propensity for bone fractures particularly of the hip, vertebrae and forearm (Cummings *et al.* 1985, 178). Elling Woman exhibited five of the nine characteristics.

**4. Disability in the form of osteoporosis.**

**6. Semi-naked beneath her leather cape with only a woollen belt.**

**7. Presence of capes, belts made of leather and wool.**

**8. Focus on the head. Elling woman had been hanged.**

**9. Her feet were bound and her body was also restricted by the leather cape.**

**4.2.6. LINDOW MAN II ENGLAND**



**Plate 15: Lindow Man II (after Asingh 2007, 310)**

**Description of the body**

Lindow Man II was discovered in Lindow Moss, Cheshire in 1984 and has been radiocarbon dated to between 500 BC and the mid 1st century AD (plate 15) (Turner 1986, 10 and Asingh 2007, 310).

Medical examination of the remains revealed that he was a young healthy man of around 25 years, 168 cm (5ft 6") in height, well nourished with short hair, trimmed beard, callous free hands and manicured fingernails (Joy 2009, 26-29). Other than a fox fur band around his upper left arm he was naked (Turner 1986, 51; Giles, 2009, 83). He was the victim of excessive violence including, a depressed fracture of his skull, a possible stab wound on his right chest (Connolly 1985, 16; Joy 2009, 38-44). Furthermore his throat had been slit; he had been garrotted by a 1.5mm diameter animal sinew and his neck had been broken either by strangulation or a blow to the back of his head (ibid.).

Lindow II man has been interpreted as the ritual death of an Irish druidic prince by Ann Ross and Don Robins due to the mistletoe pollen found in his stomach, though only four grains were found (Chamberlain and Parker-Pearson 2001, 67). Mistletoe is a rare plant that only grows as a parasite on oak, apple, lime and hawthorn trees (Ross and Robins 1991, 40). It was considered to be an "all heal" medicinal plant with connections to fertility and rebirth, supposedly revered by the ancient druids as a talisman for their otherworldly journeys (Paine 2006, 19; Ross and Robins 1991, 40; Aldhouse-Green and Aldhouse -Green 2005, 113). Classical writers record the mistletoe gathering ceremonies conducted by the druids at favourable times of the year (Ross and Robins 1991, 40). Ross and Robins claim that the presence of mistletoe pollen, no matter how small, is an indicator of the ritualistic nature of Lindow Man's demise (ibid.). It should also be pointed out that the mistletoe pollen may well have also been ingested inadvertently and although it can be poisonous European mistletoe (*Viscum album*) is not believed to be hallucinogenic (Joy 2009, 31). Lindow Man II exhibited six out of the nine characteristics.

- 1. Excessive violence including blows to the head, slitting of the throat, strangulation and stabbing.**
- 2. Asphyxiation manifested by the presence of a garotte.**
- 5. Un-calloused hands and manicured fingernails.**
- 6. Naked.**
- 7. Fur armband.**

**8. Focus on the head. There was a very strong focus on the head of Lindow Man II as he was bludgeoned, garrotted and had his throat cut.**

#### 4.2.7. YDE GIRL NETHERLANDS



Plate 16: Yde Girl (after Deem 1998, 32)

#### Description of the body

Yde girl was first discovered in 1897, and her body was badly damaged by the peat dredging tools that uncovered her (plate 16) (van der Sanden 1996, 83). She is thought to have been aged around 16 years of age when she died and radiocarbon dating has placed her in the late Iron Age between 40 BC and 50 AD (van der Plicht *et al.* 2004, 486). She was around 140 cm in height and her short stature may have been due to a disorder known as idiopathic scoliosis which involves a lateral curvature of the spine (Granite 2012, 107; Asher and Burton 2006, 2). As well as scoliosis she also had deformities in her feet and her sacrum, probably related to her scoliosis (Granite 2012, 108).

The right side of her head had been shaved while the rest of her hair, which was 20 cm in length, had been left untouched (van der Sanden 1995, 154). The shaven hair had been placed beside her body in the bog (Granite 2012, 107). A woollen sprang measuring 220 cm was found around her neck and the impression of a slip knot had been left under her left ear (*ibid.*). The slipknot impression indicated

that the woollen sprang had been used to strangle her although a stab wound found near her left clavicle may also have contributed to her death (*ibid.*). A woollen cloak was found close to the body and this appeared to be worn and of poor quality (van der Sanden 1995, 161). Yde girl exhibited six out of the nine characteristics.

- 1. Excessive violence.**
- 2. Asphyxiation caused by strangulation with a woollen sprang.**
- 4. She suffered from scoliosis (curvature of the spine) and deformities of the feet.**
- 6. Naked.**
- 7. Woollen cape found near her body.**
- 8. Focus on the head. She had been strangled and one side of her head had been shaved.**

#### 4.2.8. KAYHAUSEN BOY GERMANY

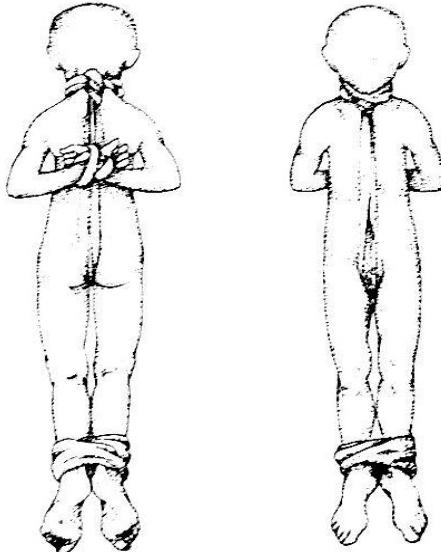


Figure 12: Kayhausen Boy (after Aldhouse-Green 2001, 158)

#### Description of the body

This young boy was found in 1922, in Kayhausen bog situated in the Ammerland district of Lower Saxony, Germany, during peat harvesting (fig. 12) (Granite 2012, 77). He is thought to have been between seven and 14 years of age when he died and radiocarbon dating revealed that he would have lived in the early to middle Iron Age, sometime between 515- 385 BC (*ibid.*, 78). His body exhibited

multiple stab wounds in the area of the neck and back (*ibid.*, 77). His arms had been bound behind his back with some form of woollen fabric (Aldhouse-Green 2005, 34). The same cloth had been wound around his neck several times and looped through his legs. His feet appeared to have also been bound with a cape (van der Sanden 1996, 93).

Evidence of Harris lines indicated that his growth had been arrested possibly due to illness or malnutrition (Granite 2012, 78). Kayhausen boy suffered from avascular necrosis of the femoral head a condition that occurs when the blood supply to the hip is restricted (The Methodist Hospital System 2003, 4). This can be due to dislocation of the hip or a fractured femur, which may tear the blood vessels cutting off the blood supply resulting in bone death (*ibid.*). It can also be caused by diseases such as leukaemia and sickle cell anaemia (*ibid.*, 5). Whatever the cause may have been, the result would have been severely limited mobility and pain (*ibid.*). Kayhausen Boy exhibited six out of the nine characteristics.

- 1. Excessive violent exhibited by multiple stab wounds.**
- 2. Asphyxiation.**
- 4. He suffered from avascular necrosis of the femoral head.**
- 6. Naked apart from his woollen bindings.**
- 7. A cape had been used to bind his feet.**
- 8. Focus on the head. There were stab wounds around his neck and the woollen cloth used to bind him had also been twisted around his neck.**
- 9. He had been bound.**

#### 4.2.9. DÄTGEN MAN, GERMANY



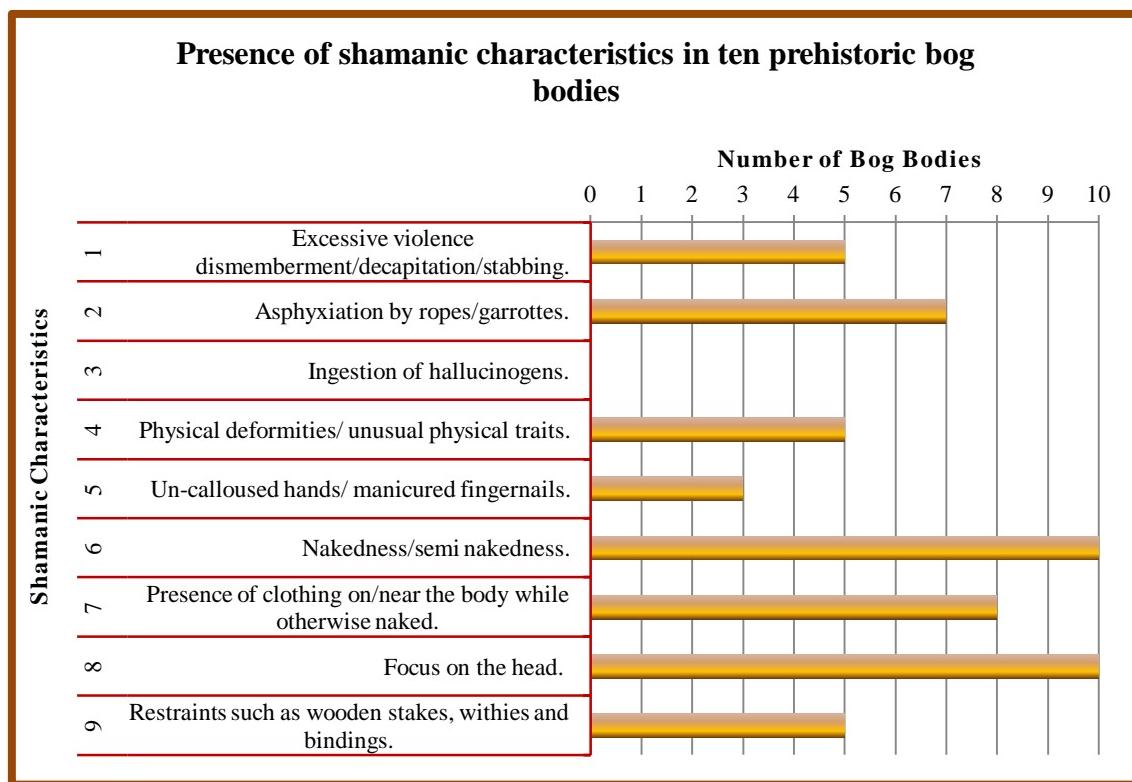
Plate 17: Dätgen Man (after Deem 1998, 31)

#### Description of the body

This individual was found in Grosses Moor in Northern Germany and he has been dated to 150 BC (plate 17) (Asingh 2007, 397). He is thought to have been around thirty years of age when he died (*ibid.*). He was naked apart from a woollen cord that had been tied around his left ankle (Coles and Coles 1989, 189). Dätgen Man had suffered excessive violence including, stab wounds to his chest, decapitation and his legs had been broken *ante mortem* (Coles and Coles 1989, 189; Asingh 2007, 397). His head was found 3 metres from his body and his hair was tied in a Swabian knot very similar to that of the decapitated head of Osterby Man found in Kohlmoor, Northern Germany in 1948 (Asingh 2007, 309). Tacitus refers to this hairstyle as one worn by free Germanic men (*ibid.*, 397). Both his head and his body had been staked down into the bog using wooden stakes (*ibid.*). A woollen cloak was found close to the body and the wooden haft of the axe that may have been used to decapitate him was also found nearby (Coles and Coles 1989, 189). Dätgen Man exhibited five of the nine characteristics.

- 1. He had been repeatedly stabbed, his legs had been broken and he had been decapitated.**
- 6. Naked.**
- 7. A woollen cloak found close by.**
- 8. Focus on the head. Dätgen Man had been decapitated and his head placed some distance from his body.**

9. A woollen cord had been tied around his ankle. Both his head and body had been staked down into the bog using wooden stakes.



**Table 1: Possible shamanic characteristics present in ten prehistoric bog bodies.**

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

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This thesis set out to test, examine and evaluate the possible influence of shamanic practice in the deposition of bog bodies in prehistory. It did this by listing and defining nine characteristics taken from shamanic/druidic related literature discussed in the literary review. These features were then compared to similar features present in ten bog bodies presented as case studies.

The first characteristic concerned the extreme violence such as repeated stabbing, decapitation and dismemberment that has been found among a considerable number of the bog bodies. This is also a characteristic of shamanism although, in the case of ethnographic shamanism, the extreme violence and dismemberment is of a spiritual nature rather than a physical one (Williams 2003, 103). However in Irish mythological narratives there is reference to the death of Lleu who, although not a shaman himself, was related to the shape shifting Tuatha De Danann (Jones 1998, 72). In this story Lleu is killed by a spear sacred to him and his emaciated remains are placed at the top of the world tree where he is restored to human form (*ibid.*).

The concept of death, disintegration and then resurrection or rebirth may have played a role in the treatment of the bog bodies perhaps in the performance of fertility rites. Extreme violence is also a feature of druidic divination. The druids brutally stabbed their sacrificial victims in order to foretell the future through the convulsive death throes of their bodies and in some instance their entrails (O'hOgain 1999, 74). In this study, five of the ten bog bodies exhibited some form of excessive violence (table 1). Two of the bodies, Oldcroghan Man and Dätgen Man, had been decapitated while Kayhausen Boy, Lindow Man II and Yde Girl had all suffered disproportionate violence in the form of throat cutting and stabbing. There are many more examples among the bog bodies, for instance, the decapitated head of Worsley Man from England who had also been hanged or Clonycavan Man from Ireland who had been bludgeoned and disembowelled (Garland 1995, 106; Iping-Petterson, 2012, 24).

Asphyxiation was the next characteristic to be explored and this has been used among ethnographic and historic shamans in order to induce a state of altered consciousness in order to attain visions and cultic knowledge (Mason, 1995, 397). It has also been referred to in mythology as the Viking god Odin hung himself from Ydrassil, the world tree, for nine nights in order to gain the occult knowledge of the runes (fig. 13) (Eliade 2004, 380).



**Figure 13: Odin "Master of Ecstasy" hangs himself from the Ydrassil Tree (after Daniel Africano 2008 - 2009 dafricano.wix.com)**

As in the case of dismemberment or decapitation the spectacle of an individual being hanged or garrotted would most certainly have had a powerful effect on those witnessing the event possibly adding to the collective memory of the community (Williams 2003, 103). Death by asphyxiation can be prolonged and during this period the victim may suffer convulsions and in some cases sexual arousal (Uva 1995, 574-575). This could be interpreted as another physical manifestation of the shaman's otherworldly journey or perhaps evidence of his or her communion with supernatural entities. P. V. Glob refers to the hanging of Tollund Man as the method by which he passes over the threshold of death to be delivered to the goddess so that he can be sanctified to her for eternity (Glob 1975, 119). In shamanic terms, this could be interpreted as marriage to a spirit spouse which ethnographically takes place during shamanic initiation (Vitebsky 1995, 46). This idea of being

married to the earth goddess or mother is also found in Irish mythology (Waddell 2009, 1). With regard to the male bog bodies, if ejaculation took place this may have been perceived as the physical manifestation of sexual congress with entities from the other worlds, perhaps even the fertility goddess herself.

Among the bog bodies examined in this study seven (table 1) exhibited signs of asphyxiation in one form, or another, three were hanged while the other four had been garrotted or strangled. Bolkilde I in particular demonstrates the continuity of this practice through time and although not examined in this study, there is at least one other Neolithic example from Denmark. Two bodies aged between 16 and 20 years were found in Sigersdal Mose and radiocarbon dated to a similar period as the Bolkilde bog bodies (3485 to 3510 BC) (Bennike, *et al.* 1986, 206). Like the older of the two Bolkilde bodies, the older individual of this pair, most probably female, had been either hanged or strangled with a string that had been laid double and then twisted several times around her neck (*ibid.*). Denmark has also produced a hanged bog body that dates to the transition period from the Neolithic to the Bronze Age (*ibid.*). Stenstrup Man, who has been radiocarbon dated to 1795-1890 BC, was also found with a rope around his neck (*ibid.*).

The third characteristic considered is probably the most shamanic, the ingestion of hallucinogens. The ingestion or inhalation of substances that can induce trance is an integral part of shamanism (Vitebsky 1995, 46). Common among ethnographic shamans evidence has also been found archaeologically such as the votive site at Frensham in Surrey England, dating to the early Roman Period, where a small ceramic vessel contained cannabis (Aldhouse-Green and Aldhouse Green 2005, 123). The alkaloids contained in ergot, a fungus found on rye crops, can produce toxins that if taken in a high enough dose, induce hallucinations, convulsions and ultimately death (Derham *et al.* 2004, 187). Ergot was found in the digestive tracts of both Tollund Man as well as Grauballe Man and interpreted as an ingredient of a final ritualistic last meal (*ibid.*). However this is now a very contentious issue and some archaeologists believe that it may have been present accidentally, perhaps

an environmental indicator of crop failure (*ibid.*). No evidence of the deliberate use of hallucinogenic substances were found in any of the bog bodies examined in this study (table 1).

Physical deformities and/or unusual traits was the fourth characteristic to be used. Shamans are often chosen because of the physical or mental peculiarities that may set them apart from the rest of their society. People with deformities, diseases or other idiosyncrasies would have lived on the margins of their communities related to the boundaries the shaman crosses in order to visit the other worlds (Williams 2010, 231). Ethnographically the election of a shaman is marked by a serious illness often coincidental with the onset of maturity (*ibid.*, 28). Adolescence is considered as a liminal age group and three of the bog bodies fall within this range including Bolkilde II, Yde Girl and Kayhausen Boy (Aldhouse-Green and Aldhouse-Green 2005, 163).

Things such as stature, birthmarks and some form of sexual ambiguity may also have been considered as a sign that an individual had been touched by the spirits and was, therefore, a suitable shamanic initiate (Williams 2003, 103). Shamanisms is concerned with transformation and in order to traverse the layers of the cosmos they are often thought to be able to shape shift morphing into another gender, some form of animal or monstrous entity (Aldhouse-Green 2005, 180). Bolkilde I, Yde girl and Kayhausen, boy, all presented with skeletal abnormalities while Elling Woman suffered from a degenerative disease osteoporosis most commonly found in postmenopausal women. Oldcroghan Man may have been chosen because of his exceptional height and strength which would have set him apart from his community.

The fifth characteristic was un-calloused hands and manicured fingernails. In ethnographic shamanism, the fingernails are often connected with magico-ritual activity (Brill 1982, 103). Classical writers have referred to druids as a special caste and in some cases they would have also been royal or part of an elite and therefore, would not have participated in manual labour. Three of the bog bodies examined in this study (table 1) had this characteristic implying that they were high status.

Nakedness or semi nakedness is practiced by ethnographic shamans as part of their séances and it is connected with rebirth (Merkur 1992, 132; Jakobsen 1999, 62). The Greenlandic Angakkoq shaman is often semi-naked wearing only a loin cloth (*ibid.*, 73). All ten of the bog bodies exhibited this characteristic (table 1). Although all ten of the bog bodies were presumed to be either naked or semi-naked accessory clothing such as capes, belts, hats and armlets made of animal hides, fur or wool were placed on or near their bodies. In some cases they were used as bindings as in the case of Kayhausen Boy, Gallagh Man and Elling Woman. Animal skins can be symbolic of the shaman's animal persona or their totem (Aldhouse-Green and Aldhouse-Green 2005, 111).

Ann Ross and Don Robins have interpreted the fox fur armband of Lindow Man II as a totemic badge implying that he belonged to a tribe associated with the fox (Ross and Robins 1991, 58). Druids are said to have worn mantles made of animal skins while predicting the future (Aldhouse-Green and Aldhouse-Green 2005, 180).

P. V Glob refers to the description of the Germani warriors by both Julius Caesar and Tacitus as wearing a short skin cape under which they were completely naked (plate 18) (Glob 1975, 96-97). Gallagh Man fits the description of a Germani warrior as he is described as being completely naked under his short deerskin cape (van der Sanden 1996, 73). Furthermore, as previously mentioned, Leslie Ellen Jones has conjectured that shamanism may have been the domain of the Irish warrior king or knight (Jones 1998, 82). This of course would not explain the

numerous female bog bodies that have been buried with similar attire. Among the bog bodies examined here, eight including Gallagh Man had some form of clothing on or near their body while otherwise naked.



**Plate 18: Chained and naked Northerners wearing short skin capes (after Glob 1975, illus. 46).**

There was focus on the head, in one form or another, in all ten of the bog bodies examined in this thesis (table 1). This includes decapitation where the head was completely removed and placed elsewhere, as in the case of both Oldcroghan Man and Dätgen Man. Strangulation or hanging produces transformation of the face due to contortion, swelling and petechiae which can also appear in the conjunctiva of the eyes (Kabbash 2014; Hawley 2014). As well as being strangled Yde girl also had one side of her head shaved.

Both in ethnographic shamanism and ancient Celtic culture the head is where the spirit or the soul lives (Armit 2012, 36). In shamanism, the skull can be a tool used to represent the emptying of the mind that the shaman must go through in order to enter the consciousness of another being (Cowan 1993, 37). For the Huichol Indian shamans of Mexico, the skull contains the portal through which one passes after death into the other world (*ibid.*). Heads were believed to be guardians of the gateways to the other worlds (*ibid.*, 40). As mentioned earlier Evenki and Canadian Inuit shamans do not cut their hair as they believe that the soul is also present within it. In cutting the hair, one is cutting away part of the soul (Brill 1982, 103). In an ancient Irish legend warrior hero, Cuchulain had a fiery halo around his head and in battle he is said to have been able to spin in his skin giving him the ability to fight in all directions (Cowan 1993, 40).

Five of the ten bog bodies were restrained, pegged down or bound. In shamanism bonds, in the physical world represent the shaman's escape to the other worlds. For the Sioux of North America the shaman who leads the Yuwipi ceremony allows himself to be tied up before the ritual begins (Lewis 1990, 71-72). Yuwipi is related to the shaman's escape from bondage, in doing so he can return bringing knowledge and healing (*ibid.*). If the bog bodies were shamans, restraint and binding could be construed as a way of harnessing their powers of healing and supernatural connections by binding them to a liminal place where they act as permanent intercessors traversing the other worlds for the greater good of their communities. Conversely, they may have been powerful shamans from rival tribes, their ritual killing and deposition in the bogs a way of neutralising that power by trapping and confusing their spirits.

Of the nine characteristics discussed in this thesis eight were present among the ten bog bodies (table 1). The use of hallucinogens has played a significant role in shamanism, ethnographically and historically. Archaeologically there also appears to be evidence that people in antiquity had access to and were using hallucinogenic substances to enter states of altered consciousness. However, this was a limited study of only ten bog bodies and one that had quite a limited timescale. A more extensive study and perhaps one that includes other forms of deviant burial may well have produced quite a different result.

The two characteristics that appear in all ten of the bog bodies are nakedness/semi nakedness and a focus on the head. Focus on the head in particular is very much a part of both shamanism and what is known of Iron Age belief systems, since both consider the head as the place where an individual's spirit resides. Taking this into consideration it is not surprising that it should play a large role in treatment and demise of the bog bodies. However, much of what is known about Iron Age belief systems, in particular, comes from classical and medieval texts. Consequently this information should be interpreted with some caution since much of what is written was composed by those who were opposed to these prehistoric beliefs. Nevertheless there are some quite remarkable correlations.

## CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

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In conclusion, this thesis has attempted to examine, test and evaluate the possible influence of shamanic practice in the deposition of prehistoric bog bodies. Shamanism is extremely ancient with archaeological evidence of shamanic activity dating as far back as the Palaeolithic. The spread and longevity of shamanic ideas and practices across Eurasia can no doubt be attributed to contact between Siberian, Scandinavian, Germanic and Celtic tribes the evidence of which can be found both archaeologically and linguistically (Buchholz 1984, 428). Since shamanism is not a religion in itself, but rather a set of principles that link religion and society, it is capable of coexisting and melding with many different religious belief systems (Williams 2003, 101). There is no doubt that the descriptions of the druids and their practices have many features in common with shamanism and perhaps the alternation between the words druid and shaman is purely semantics. A belief in a tiered cosmos, the immortality of the soul, spiritual journey, healing through sacrifice, mediation between worlds through altered states of consciousness as well as the ability to transmogrify or regenerate are very much a part of ancient and modern religions.

Some of the theories, surrounding bog bodies discussed in this thesis, including sacrifices to invoke or appease the gods, wiedergangers, sacral kingship and inauguration include at least some of these principles. Shamanic activity does not necessarily preclude the other theories but may instead run parallel or indeed lend further support to them. Were the bog bodies shamans? It is possible that a shaman may have offered him or herself as the ultimate sacrifice or scapegoat particularly during periods of famine, disease epidemic or war. However it is more likely that the bog bodies were the victims of shamanic acts rather than shamans themselves. Performance is very much a part of shamanism past and present. The people placed in the bogs may have been part of a ritualistic drama that communicated the shaman's otherworldly journey or spiritual knowledge to the wider community. One thing that is certain about those who were consigned to the bogs, their deaths were dramatic and probably part of a spectacle rich in religious dogma.

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